1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

she is preceded by a man carrying a wooden figure (*kaisa*) representing a woman, carved out of soft wood, about three feet high, and realistically painted, no physical features being omitted. A long pole-like handle is carved in one piece with the figure, by means of which the figure is carried on high like a standard. It is set down beside the door of the hut, and after the bride has gone in, it is taken to the *tobar* belonging to the men of the bridegroom's mother's clan, and carefully stored there. This figure, although that of an adult, represents the woman's future child; its purpose is to ensure that she will soon conceive. It is female because it is desirable that her first child shall be a girl. Female children are much desired in this community because, descent being matrilineal, the children of a woman who is *tsunaun* will themselves be *tsunaun* and carry on the line, whatever the position of their father. When once the figure is placed in the *tobar* it may not be taken out again, for if a woman were to see it the child would die. It remains in the *tobar* until the child is fully grown, when it is destroyed. But the hold of this belief is weakening, and on my expressing a desire to purchase one such figure which was shown to me, I was permitted to do so, on condition that I carried it away carefully swathed in wrappings, and did not allow any of the native women to see it, a promise which I took care to keep. It is reproduced in Pl. 8*a*.

There are certain men who know how to carve these figures. Unless the bridegroom's family numbers one of these among its members, they have to pay one string of *beroan* and give a pig to the man who makes it, or they may pay another six strings of *beroan* in lieu of the pig.

The use of these figures is rapidly dying out on the island of Buka and its adjacent islets, owing to discouragement by the missionaries on the ground that they are obscene. On Bougainville, very similar figures are made for use in the *watawutf* ceremony (see Pl. 28), but so far as I could ascertain they are not used in the marriage rites in that region.

SUMMARY OF EVENTS LEADING UP TO MARRIAGE

Occasion	*Transactions*
1. Betrothal, when both are children, the girl often quite a baby.	Father of boy presents spear hung with one string of *beroan* to mother of girl. Betel-mixture chewed.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

on to the doors of your house. Your wife will then love you again and will come back to you.

Often but little notice is taken of these affairs. Occasionally an injured husband will claim from his wife's lover a string of ceremonial currency or a pig, or he may take the opportunity to divorce his wife, but usually only if he wishes to do so on other grounds. More often nothing is done about it, unless the woman becomes pregnant.

There are a number of plants (see pp. 134–8) believed to possess contraceptive properties, which are generally known and widely used by the women in their intrigues. Whatever the reason, it is certain that these affairs are followed by pregnancy less often than might be expected. When conception does occur, the matter begins to be taken seriously. Sometimes the woman will pretend that the child is her husband's, and this will be tacitly accepted, even though other people besides the couple and the woman's husband know it to be false. This I have on hearsay evidence only. In other cases—this also I have only through informants, but from more than one, and these reasonably reliable—attempts are made to produce an abortion in order to avoid discovery. One account given to me runs as follows: 'If a woman has been with her lover in the bush and finds she is pregnant, she says to him: "My blood is not flowing, I think I am going to have a child, I have had no flow for one moon." They are ashamed, and talk about it for a long time. Then the man gets the leaves of the *karēb* plant (a tough creeper, of the *Rutaceae* order, whose stems are used for making string), and chews them with lime, and rubs the mixture on the women's abdomen. She swallows some of it, and it causes the flow to begin again. Then the man says to all the people who laughed at the woman because they thought she was pregnant: "Look, she is menstruating, she is not pregnant".' It may be that the massaging of the abdomen is sufficiently violent to produce the desired effect, without presupposing any actual result of chewing the *karēb* leaves. They say that a woman will never bring about an abortion in the case of a child by her own husband, however many she may have. But they do it for the children of their lovers, because if a woman has a child by a man other than her husband she is ashamed. Cases have occurred in the past of women pregnant by their lovers committing suicide by jumping from the top of a tree.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

IV

PREGNANCY AND CHILD-BIRTH

KNOWLEDGE OF PATERNITY

842 IT will be evident from what has been said in the preceding chapter concerning the attitude of these natives to extra-marital intercourse when it results in pregnancy, that they are aware of the connexion between copulation and conception. They say, of the man, *wataputs bai'i*, which may be translated 'he makes the child come up', *wataputs* being also used in the sense of 'to go and fetch', and *taputs* without the causative prefix *wa-* meaning 'to come at a person's call'. Of the woman, it is said *mon to giug non*, 'the woman is pregnant'. The same terms are applied to animals. There is abundant evidence of their knowledge in their conversations and in their tales. One of these, for example, deals with a 842 woman whose husband was impotent. She begs him to let her go, 837 so that she can marry a man by whom she can have a child. He refuses, and she takes a lover in the bush, by whom she becomes 848 pregnant. Her husband says: 'Who has made you pregnant? I 586 know the child is not mine, because I cannot have coitus with you.' When the child is born the husband kills it, and the woman divorces him and marries her lover.

842 Their knowledge, however, does not seem to go beyond the necessity for copulation. The child is thought to be formed out of the woman's blood. This idea may possibly have been suggested by the cessation of the menses during pregnancy since this causal relationship is recognized by them. On the part of the man, pene- [831] tration is thought to be the essential factor. The seminal fluid is looked upon as water, and there is complete ignorance as to the function of the testicles. Village gossip has it that there was a man—now dead—in a neighbouring village whose penis was destroyed by a sore. He made an artificial one of wood, by means of which he copulated with his wife, who produced offspring. The name of one of his sons still living was adduced as proof of the truth of the story, the obvious explanation apparently not being applied to this case. There are other indications of the

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

presence of this idea. My attention was first drawn to it by watching a man castrate a young European pig he had just purchased from a trader. Knowing that European pigs are greatly prized, I asked him why he did not leave the pig alone so that he could mate it with his sow. (Pigs of mixed origin are counted as European pigs.) His reply was that what he was doing would not interfere with that at all, he would get European pigs from his sow just the same, because he only cut away the testicles (*orn*) and not the penis (*utsin*). To emphasize his point he reminded me that all the young males among the village pigs were castrated, but that the sows continued to produce young. There are plenty of wild pigs in the bush who have free access to the domestic sows, but this explanation was not accepted when I offered it.[1] The belief in the sufficiency of penetration was then stated, and further conversation elicited the fact that it was considered to apply also in the case of human beings.

Given this idea, it is not such a very far cry to the further belief that conception can take place without the co-operation of the male, and there is no doubt that this also is held. The legend, widespread over this area, which traces the origin of all the people from the two sons of an old woman who impregnated herself by means of a banana, is literally believed. It is admitted that this story belongs to times long past, but in a discussion arising out of its narration the opinion was expressed among the audience that it was still possible for a woman to conceive by means of a banana, and the same thing was asserted by an altogether different informant on another occasion, when we were discussing ceremonies and taboos associated with birth. The connexion between bananas and child-bearing appears again in the ceremony for a girl's first menstruation, when the girl climbs a banana palm of a species whose fruit may never be eaten by children, or by boys wearing the *upi* (see p. 254). In discussing certain prohibitions connected with the planting and eating of bananas in the south-eastern Solomons, Ivens suggests that this plant may in the past have possessed a sacred character, and supports his suggestion by citing parallels from other peoples. He need not have gone as far afield

[1] Malinowski records a similar experience (1929, p. 162). The reason given to me, on more than one occasion, for the practice of castrating the domestic pigs, is that it prevents them from becoming wild and running away into the bush, and that if they should do so, it enables the hunters who might catch them in their nets to recognise them as somebody's property and let them go.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

842 824 171 as the Baganda of Africa for an instance of the belief 'that bananas have power to effect fertility in women and of themselves cause pregnancy' (1927, p. 272).

842 824 789 Belief in the possibility of conception without intercourse is explicitly stated in the following 'prescription', which was given to me, with a specimen of the plant named *kō* (this has not been identified), in the course of an investigation into the uses of plants as 'medicines', entirely apart from any discussion on child-bearing, a circumstance which, in my opinion, increases its value as evidence.

[845] If you have a grudge against a woman for refusing you her favours, take the bud at the top of a sprig of *kō*, and put it below the door at the *babots* (women's entrance) of her hut. When she has passed over it she will bear twins, even if she does not have intercourse with a man.

842 171 There seems to be sufficient evidence to justify the statement that, on the north coast of Bougainville, belief in the possibility of impregnation without intercourse occurs among a people who are acquainted with physiological paternity. The words used by F. E. Williams in describing a somewhat similar state of affairs among the natives of the Morehead River, Papua, so exactly express my own view, that I cannot refrain from quoting them: 'I think we cannot escape the conclusion that these two theories . . . exist together, and that the second is generally accepted and overlies the first; but that the native, despite the inconsistency of the two theories, can at different times express a sincere belief in each of them' (1933, No. 128).

CONTRACEPTIVES

842 Recognition of physical paternity is clearly implied in the widespread use of 'medicines' to prevent conception. This knowledge is common to both sexes, and the practice is freely discussed. The 'medicines' are employed chiefly to avoid complications in the course of clandestine amours. Their use by married couples is rare, children being much desired. But one man told me that he had given one of them to his wife after the birth of their sixth child, saying that their family was now large enough.

842 824 A number of different plants are used for this purpose. One of the most widely known, judging from the fact that it was given me by three independent informants, from the three villages of Kurtatchi, Tabut, and Baniu, is the fern called in the Kurtatchi dialect *asam* (*Lygodium dichotomum* Sw.). The Petats people call

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

it *aisam*, and do not, so far as I know, use it as a contraceptive, but regard it as of virtue in fishing magic (see p. 350). It has a very tough stem, the outer skin of which is used throughout the whole area as a fastening, particularly in the making of canoes. For use as a contraceptive, the procedure is as follows:

The woman takes a piece of the root of *asam* and chews it with the betel-mixture. Some of the mixture must be swallowed. Some of it she spits out into the palm of her hand, and with it massages her abdomen thoroughly. The piece of root which remains over must be hung up in the rafters of the hut, where the smoke from the fire will reach it, and left there. As the smoke hardens the root, the woman's belly 'becomes fast', so that she cannot conceive. If it is desired that the sterility be permanent, after the *asam* root has been thoroughly smoked, it is taken down from the rafters and buried. She will then never be able to have any more children. But if it is desired to have a child later, the root is left up in the rafters until such a time as the woman wishes to conceive; it is then taken down and thrown away into swiftly running water, or into the sea. As the current carries it away, 'her belly opens again' so that she can conceive.

One of the three informants—incidentally, all three were men—from whom I obtained this 'prescription' was not aware of any means by which the effect could be counteracted, otherwise the three accounts were similar. Another added that it was sometimes given to a woman by her husband prior to his departure for a long period, and that on his return he would throw away the *asam* that he had left in the rafters, thus removing the bar to conception. A man who gives this medicine to a woman must not go fishing for *makɔ* (a small fish, something like a mullet, caught on the open reef) for one or two days afterwards, or the medicine will not work.

Three other plants credited by the people of North Bougainville with contraceptive properties are used in similar fashion:

Paparau (*Vitex Lagundi*).

Scrape the roots and chew the scrapings with the betel-mixture. The solid part of the mixture must be swallowed, the saliva is spat out on to the hand and rubbed over the abdomen. The rest of the root is then put up in the rafters to harden in the smoke. As the smoke hardens the root, 'the woman's belly dries up', so that she cannot conceive.

Rūnis (a tree, unidentified).

The leaves of this tree must be rubbed well between the hands, water is poured over them and mixed with the sap thus squeezed out. The

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

842
824

woman drinks this water and sap, she then chews bits of the root with the betel-mixture, spits it out, and rubs it over her abdomen. None is swallowed.

Win (*Licuala*, a small fan palm).

Take a piece of the root of this tree, and split it in two lengthwise. Give half to the woman and keep the other half for yourself. Both must chew and swallow the outer part, or 'skin' of the root. Take the inside part of both halves back home with you and put it up in the rafters of the hut where it will be hardened by the smoke. If, later on, it is desired that the woman should conceive, take down these pieces of root from the rafters and throw them into the sea. If they are burnt, she will never be able to have children afterwards.

The man who gave me the last of these 'prescriptions' added that he himself always used it when he wanted to 'steal' a woman in the bush.

The Petats people make use of the root of a small tree called in their dialect *hahōlon*, which the authorities at Kew Gardens identified from my sample as a species of *Mallotus*.[1] Scrapings from the root are chewed with the betel-mixture, and must be swallowed. The root from which the scrapings were taken is kept in the woman's hut. If at a later time children are desired, it is taken out and put in a place where there is running water. If it be burnt, the woman cannot conceive again. My informant added that if an unmarried girl (there were a few at Petats) wishes to cohabit she uses this medicine.

The following account of contraceptive procedure as practised on the neighbouring island of Pororan was given to me by Mr. Gordon Thomas, to whom I am indebted for permission to publish it, and also for a sample of the leaves and roots of the tree concerned, which unfortunately could not be identified. It is not the same as the *hahōlon* tree used on Petats.

'When a woman is desirous of becoming permanently barren she is given the root of the *malayal* tree, from which she scrapes off the outside skin and eats it, throwing the inside root on to a fire, which must be at her back. This process is repeated after a pause of four or five days, such repetition to be made four times. The

[1] The capsules of *Mallotus philippensis* furnish the red powder called in India *kamala*, and used there to produce a red dye. *Kamala* is also used as a vermifuge, especially for the expulsion of taenia. The powder may be obtained from other parts of the plant also. It can be crystallized in ether, its composition is $C_{22}H_{10}O_6$. See Maiden, 1889, pp. 192, 298.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

time usually chosen for the administering of this root is shortly after child-birth, before she has had intercourse with any man since the birth. Sometimes the medicine is given to a young girl before she has reached the age of puberty. When this is done she will always remain barren. There is no cessation of the menses when barrenness is brought about. Should a woman wish for only temporary barrenness, then after eating the outside skin of the root she will retain carefully the inside root, and at the time when she is desirous of bearing children again, she will place the root in a pool of water where there are tadpoles. These little creatures will fasten themselves to the root and feed from it. After a short while, she will become fertile. Should, however, fecundity not return after the tadpoles have sucked the inner root, then another medicine to bring on fertility is used.'

It will be noted that stress is laid, in most of these 'prescriptions', on the keeping of the root in the rafters where it is exposed to smoke—'as the smoke hardens the root, so the woman's belly becomes fast'—that is, it works by virtue of what we are accustomed to call 'sympathetic magic'. But sometimes the 'medicine', when chewed with the betel-mixture, is also swallowed, so it is not inconceivable that some of these 'medicines' may have the power of acting upon the body in some way which might diminish the chances of fertilization. Many plants used as medicines in Australia and India, some of which are irritant poisons, are known to be efficacious in restoring a scanty or absent menstrual flux. Whether there is any active principle in the Melanesian contraceptives could only be determined by analysis, and unfortunately the specimens I brought home were not of sufficient bulk to permit of this. Their effectiveness is firmly believed in by all. Their use was frequently cited in discussion, as an explanation of the recognized fact that clandestine unions do not lead to pregnancy as often as might be expected. Mention of childless marriages, when they came into the genealogies, was often followed by the volunteered remark that the woman had taken a contraceptive medicine. In some of the marriages personally known to me the woman herself accounted for her barrenness in this way. I may cite one of these as an example.

Matarē and his wife Marotē seem to be a very well-matched couple. They live together amicably, and work together most of the time. They always seem to be on good terms. Both are more

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

842 intelligent, or at any rate more articulate, than the majority of people in the village. They had one child, who died in infancy. They very much want another. But while Matarē was away working as an indentured labourer, Marotē had an intrigue with a man from another village, during which she took contraceptive medicine. The affair was discovered by her husband's brother, who told 842 Matarē about it when he returned, and wanted him to divorce her. 837 But he did not do so, partly because he liked her, but also because she is Pinari's daughter, and he did not want to offend the *tsunaun*. As his brother and another man had given her a thrashing, he left it at that. He has never taken a second wife, and says he does not want one. Marotē has not conceived again, and believes that this is because she took the contraceptive medicine. She has tried various counteracting medicines, but without result. To my personal knowledge, her menstrual periods are normal and regular, and there seems no reason why, having already borne one child, she should not become pregnant again, as both she and her husband are young and, to all appearance, perfectly healthy and vigorous. Another woman, who took the contraceptive after the birth of her first child, has been married three times and has had no more children.

ATTITUDE TO STERILITY

842 In these 'prescriptions' directions are given for rendering a woman permanently barren. According to my informants these are not seldom carried out. It is a curious anomaly that any one should desire permanent sterility in a community where children are generally welcomed. Such a step, believed to be irrevocable, would not be necessary to ensure to a woman freedom with her lover, the reason most frequently given for the use of these 'medicines'. It may be that the extraordinary carelessness with regard to time characteristic of these people may make a woman under such circumstances indifferent to the permanency of the result. Two women told me they did it in a passion of grief after losing [152] their first child. A tendency to impulsive action, with consequences out of all proportion to its cause, seems inherent in the Melanesian temperament, and this manifestation of it is perhaps comparable with the frenzy which leads men and women to commit suicide on some quite paltry provocation (see p. 485). The practice of using 'medicine' believed to make sterility permanent seems to be taken

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

for granted, so much so that most informants could give no explanation of it at all. It is considered to be the individual's private concern, no strong public feeling being involved. Although most people will say it is a good thing to have children, it is apparently not anti-social to abstain from doing so. A woman who desires children in vain is pitied, and those who know of remedies for her condition will offer them, but no stigma rests upon a barren woman. It is noteworthy in this connexion that sterility is not included among the causes of divorce (see p. 110). A man who wants children can take another wife, the woman is still useful to him if she works hard and looks after him well. A childless marriage seems to be regarded as unfortunate but not morally reprehensible, while intrigues are condoned unless they result in pregnancy. Religious motives for rearing a family are lacking, since the *urar* (spirits of the dead) are not worshipped by their descendants. Attention is paid to them when it is desired to obtain their help or to ward off their anger, but this is not necessarily the concern of their direct descendants. There are thus no powerful sanctions, social, moral, or religious, to counter the urge, be it grief, expediency, or any other motive, leading a woman to take steps whereby she believes herself to be rendered permanently incapable of bearing children.

MEDICINES FACILITATING CONCEPTION

When a woman who wants a child fails to become pregnant, she may have recourse to several 'medicines' thought to facilitate conception, among which are the following:

Sip (*Euphorbia hirta*).

Take a number of plants, pick off the tiny flowers (which grow in bunches close to the stalk), and push them into a hole made in a cooked taro. The woman must eat the taro, and will then be able to conceive, even if she has previously taken one of the contraceptive medicines.

Euphorbia hirta, the 'asthma herb', is used in Australia in certain pulmonary complaints (Maiden, 1889, p. 183), and there is an account in a Dutch medical work dated 1658 of its efficacy as an antidote to snake-bite, in which it is stated that 'a pinch of the dried powder, taken in some convenient menstruum, excites the heart and arouses the vital forces depressed by the poison'. Dr. Marsset of Paris, who made a study of the plant in 1885, says it seems to

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

842
824

act directly on the respiratory and cardiac centres. (See Maiden, p. 183.) There would seem to be just a possibility, in view of this, that some tonic effect might be produced by eating the flowers, or even, considering the result of recent research on Vitamin E, that these 'medicines' might really tend to assist in producing conditions favourable to conception. But it is quite unnecessary to postulate any actual effect to account for the native belief in their efficacy.

A second remedy for barrenness makes use of another plant in similar fashion:

Take the seeds of the plant called *totʃapō* and boil them with some taro leaves for a long time; this mixture must then be eaten by the woman.

Another method of using the same plant was given me by a visitor to the village:

Take the seed-vessels of the plant *wapotok* (this is its name in another dialect, the samples brought to me being identical), rub them between your hands till the seeds fall out, put these into water and give it to the woman to drink.

This plant is a variety of Cape Gooseberry (*Physalis angulata*). The seed-vessel inside the 'lantern', about the size of a large pea, contains enormous numbers of minute seeds. It seems in accordance with native methods of reasoning to suggest that it is the numbers of these seeds, and the numbers of tiny florets which are characteristic of *Euphorbia hirta*, which have caused these two plants to be associated with the production of fertility in women. This would apply also to a third 'prescription', where all possibility of any medicinal effect is ruled out:

If a man wants a child and his wife does not become pregnant, he takes a quantity of the spores from the back of the fern called *kukuis*, and gives them to some of the other women of the village, who put them into his wife's pack as they go to work. When she comes back he cohabits with her, and she will become pregnant. This can be used for a woman who has taken contraceptive medicine, because it is stronger than the medicine which fastens her belly.

The fern *kukuis* could not be identified, but it is a variety which is very richly supplied with spores.

The plants used in two further methods for ensuring pregnancy are also unidentifiable: their use is as follows:

Take the leaves of the small plant *tiwapowo*, rub them between the hands, mix with water, and let the woman drink. Can be used by a woman who has previously taken a contraceptive.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

Take portions of the roots of the tree called *wagag* (a small palm resembling an areca-palm, possibly another variety, but the nuts are not normally used for chewing). Scrape bits off these roots, and let the woman chew them with the betel-mixture, taking care to swallow some of it.

It is understood that a woman may be sterile without having taken a contraceptive. In the course of giving genealogies informants would sometimes remark, speaking of a childless marriage: 'This woman was not able to have children.' They clearly make a distinction, in talking about persons known to them, between this state of affairs and one in which 'the woman's belly was fast' because she had taken one of the medicines. There was no suggestion that the fault might lie with the male, provided that he was capable of performing the act of coitus.

In this connexion it may be added that I gathered from Government officials and missionaries with some medical training that there is very little venereal disease in this area. Such information as I received from the natives corroborates this.

PREGNANCY

Pregnancy is suspected after the omission of one menstrual period, unless the woman has been taking one of the numerous medicines (described on p. 269) which are supposed to control or inhibit the flow, in which case she will wait awhile before accepting the fact of pregnancy. They do not keep any tally of the time, and their only means of judging when to expect the birth is by the appearance of the abdomen and breasts.

There is no ceremony such as takes place among the Trobrianders (Malinowski, 1929, p. 184) or the people of New Ireland (Powdermaker, 1933, p. 60), when a woman first discovers that she is pregnant. In the olden days she used to make a belt of a special creeper called *inus*, and to wear hanging from the front of it leaves of a particular plant (*nai'iar*). As every one now wears a loin-cloth, this practice is falling into disuse, though some women wear the belt and the appropriate leaves on the top of the loin-cloth.

CEREMONY FOR PREGNANT WOMAN

Towards the end of the pregnancy a ceremony is performed with the object of ensuring easy delivery. The only estimate of

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

843 the appropriate time which I could obtain was that it took place 'when the woman's belly has grown large'. The first part of it was performed for Sacsac at Kurtatchi on March 13; her baby was born on April 30. Her mother, with whom she was staying, decided when it should be done.

843 A man is sent out into the bush to catch a young opossum. It must be brought to the village alive. Then a woman takes hold of
825 the live opossum and rubs its back against the abdomen of the
842 expectant mother. No particular woman, relative or otherwise, was specified as suitable for this duty, but in the case of Sacsac it was performed by her mother. It must be done just before sunrise. After rubbing the animal up and down several times against the woman's abdomen, the operator lets it fall to the ground. This represents the birth of the child. The people standing round ask: 'What sort of child is it?' If the opossum is a male, the woman says: 'It is a boy', if a female, she says: 'It is a girl.' This is supposed to be prognostic of the sex of the expected child, but my informants admitted that it was not always correct! I was not able to ascertain any views held by these natives as to the determination of sex, apart from this performance, and as far as I could ascertain the sex of the opossum was regarded only as an indication, not as a cause, of the sex of the baby.

843 The opossum is then killed by having its head struck on the
825 ground. Its hair is singed off, and it is boiled in a pot with some
[262] taro. Its flesh must be eaten only by women who have borne children without difficulty, otherwise the mother's delivery will be a hard one. In the case of Sacsac, her mother, who has had seven children, six of whom are living, ate most of it. The pregnant woman herself must drink the water in which the opossum has
[302] been boiled. Then her hair is cut short all round her head just above the ears, and is smeared all over with black paint. Up to this time she has not been allowed to use paint on her head.

843 Then she goes to the sea and washes. She looks for a gap in the
782 reef where the water is pouring in towards the shore very rapidly. Over this she must jump. The action is said to have the effect of shaking up the child so that when it is born delivery will take place quickly. Meanwhile, the women have been collecting all the débris from the food that has been cooked in connexion with the ceremony (the leaves and peelings of the taro, the bones of the opossum, &c.). Some of them carry it down to the sea, accompanying the pregnant

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

relations with other women, and since many men have more than one wife, and in any case opportunities for extra-marital intercourse are not lacking, this custom, of such obvious benefit to the mother, does not impose continence upon the male. But the decline in polygamy now conduces to an increasing disregard of this rule.

Failing to observe the taboo is supposed to bring ill-health to the child. An obviously sickly baby will be taken as an indication that its parents have been indulging in sexual intercourse during the prohibited period. Some do so in secret, and give the child a concoction of leaves to drink which is supposed to counteract the ill effects of the act. But in general, the women strongly resent any attempt on the part of their husbands to approach them during this prohibited period. A case occurred at Kurtatchi, some time before my arrival, of a man who divorced his wife for refusing him access at a time she considered too soon after the birth of their child. The sentiment of the village was against him, and he never succeeded in obtaining another wife. The following story from my collection also illustrates this point. It was told me as typical of what used to happen in the olden days:

There was a man whose wife had a child. The man asked his wife to go to the bush with him. The woman said: 'No, I don't want to.' The man said: 'Now come, you and I will have coitus in the bush.' The woman said: 'No, I don't want to, I am thinking of the child. I don't want the child to be hurt.' The man pressed her. He said: 'The child is not little, he is a big child now.' The woman said: 'No, I don't want people to laugh at me because my child is sickly.' The man was angry, he went alone to the bush, he climbed a *tfiniv* tree (tall slender tree from the trunk of which dug-out canoes are made). He jumped down head-first, he fell to the ground, and his neck was broken and he died. The woman went to look for her husband, she found him dead. She wailed, and said: 'Alas for my husband, he has killed himself. By and by I shall get another husband.'

It used to be looked upon as so impossible that the taboo on sexual intercourse should be broken, that if a woman became pregnant again during the prohibited period it was said that she had taken a banana and 'made the child come up' with it. 'Face-saving' seems to be popular with the Melanesian, but the method is interesting because of the belief, referred in an earlier part of this chapter, that penetration by means of a banana can cause pregnancy.

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

the mixture, the good properties of the leaves and roots, &c., are supposed to be carried into the liquid which runs into the *taraki* and the *kōbū*. This liquid is of a red colour, owing to the *owan* (impure iron oxide) which was plentifully sprinkled over the package before the coco-nut milk was poured through. It tastes bitter, probably because of the *owan*, since the liquid, being cold, could hardly act as an infusing agent during the short time it is in contact with the leaves and roots in the package, so as to acquire any properties from them.

When sufficient liquid has been poured through, the package is fastened up again and placed in the rafters of the hut over the fire. Two immature coco-nuts (*kukuts*) are put beside it. It must dry well in the smoke. This is another precaution to 'harden the girl's belly' to prevent her from menstruating again too quickly. When the girl sleeps with her husband for the first time, her mother takes down the package and the coco-nuts, and slashes the two immature coco-nuts open; this represents the 'opening of the girl' in order that she may become pregnant. The package and the coco-nuts are then thrown away into the sea by the mother, who must take care that the current carries them away immediately. This removes their restraining influence over the girl's flow of blood, so that she will have plenty to make a child. If for any reason the girl's mother considers that it is not desirable for her daughter to have a child soon, the package and the coco-nuts are left in the rafters until such time as pregnancy is desired.

The liquid which has been poured through the package into the *taraki* and the *kōbū* must be tasted by all present. The women drink from the *taraki* and the men from the *kōbū*. When every one has had a taste the rest of the liquid is put by in coco-nuts for those who are not present. A woman will save some for her husband, and a man for his wife and children. Little girls who are *tsunaun* cannot drink; they must taste it for the first time when the ceremony is performed on their behalf. Little girls who are commoners get their share with the other people; none will be prepared for them when they begin to menstruate. The coco-nuts in which the mixture is carried to other huts must be carefully kept in the rafters of those huts, and thrown into the sea at the same time as the package of leaves and roots. The belts of coloured cane worn by the girl during the period are rolled up and encased in a covering of fibre, and placed with the other things in the rafters of her

1: Blackwood E-5 (1929-1930) 1935
ON6 Buka ON6
Kurtatchi

The Nagas also erect paired monuments in which one slab of stone represents the male and the other the female (Hutton, 1922 (ii), p. 243 and Pl. XVI) to which the stones at Tiop (which are also male and female) would be closely comparable in appearance, supposing the now prostrate stone originally to have stood upright. One of the reasons the Nagas give for so doing is 'that anything else is abhorrent to nature'.

It will be remembered that children are brought to the Tiop stones by their mothers at birth, and again for cicatrization; that the patterns on the two incised stones of Buka are the same as those produced by this operation on the skin; and that cicatrization is said to 'make the milk come up' in young women, and to render each sex more attractive to the other. These considerations lead me to put forward, very tentatively, an hypothesis that the stones at Tiop and the pillars of Buka and Bougainville may perhaps once have formed part of an elaborate fertility ritual, most of which has now been lost.

The existence of the stones at Tiop, and the ritual connected with them, came to my notice only at the very end of my period of residence, when I was unable for lack of time to investigate the question more fully. Further researches in this area might bring to light other pillars and more information if it is not already gone beyond recall.

BUSH GOBLINS

To complete, so far as my material permits, the account of the beliefs held by these people in regard to ghosts and spirits, reference must be made to a group of beings which must be regarded as in a completely different category from those hitherto described. They are never called *urar* or connected in any way with persons who have died. They are not regarded with the terror inspired by the *urar*, but with a mixture of rather shamefaced fear and half-affectionate amusement apparently somewhat of the nature of the feelings of country people in bygone days towards fairies, or perhaps, since they are generally more or less mischievous, they are better compared to goblins. They live in the bush, but are not associated with special portions of it as the *urar* in their various transformations are thought to be. Their doings and adventures, particularly those into which human beings enter, provide material for endless numbers of stories, which are always much enjoyed by

881 breach is death. The chief now gives each initiate a new name,
[553] which must never be changed or dropped. The names chosen are those of deceased *putz-putzi*, who thus continue, in name, to be present at such ceremonies. This custom is for the pleasure of Ndook as well as for the spirits of the departed.

While this is in progress one or more *muri-na-lium* visit the village where the women are still wailing and relate how So-and-so has been dissected by Ndook: his legs are in one island, his head in another, and his arms in still another. Occasionally one of the men smears his body with pig's blood and, standing before several of the women, relates how he was holding his child when Ndook killed him in his arms. Similar anecdotes are related by the newly initiated when they return to their mothers. The explanation for their safe return is that after Ndook had appeased his appetite with pig and taro he relented and restored them to their mothers.

Food is then divided, and as each section or village receives its portion, the men, placing the baskets on their heads, dance in the centre of the ground. They then retire to consume the food, which is known as *goagon* (sacred food). The women are not told that the men eat the food, which is ostensibly supplied for the consumption of Ndook, who if not well fed will wreak his vengeance upon the initiates. All traces of food are removed from the person and hands and faces washed before the men return to the village. They usually pretend to be hungry, and ask at once for something to eat.

842 The natives of Pororan believe that if a married man has sexual
845 intercourse with his wife on the same night that he returns from a ceremony then she will bear twins. If a pregnant woman crosses the path made by Ndook in his travels the child when born will be deformed.

177 The inclusion of the wooden carvings in the Pororan Ndook
178 ceremony is only of very recent origin, dating from 1928. They are
881 copies of the images used in the Sailou district, north Bougainville,
[533] where initiation ceremonies form a far more important part of the ceremonial life than on Buka. These images were first imported
[134] into Malasang district, south Buka, in about 1920, being purchased with native money. From here they found their way to Hanahan. Prior to this date there were no images, and the ceremony consisted